778 of the initiates' word" and are exposed to fire to increase this power
794 (Fig. 10, 4). Beside them, /131/ a large red stain, dyoli ǰikin,
532 painted in ochre, states that man is the sacrificer, that the cult has immolation as its basis. Of such a man it is said that: "he reckons with the proof of the blood (1)" (Fig. 10, 5).

1. Dyoli tamaše mine ba.

Above the bed which consists of a simple mat placed on the ground, three engraved lines symbolize the man and two four lines the two women who alternately share his bed (Fig. 10, 6).

778 In certain villages, the drawings are made by an instrument called
794 ngwoni, used during the rituals of the year's "renewal" (2).
532
413

2. Particularly at Banankoroni.

The point of baobab wood, which is used for engraving, is as slim as a slat and fits on to a kind of racket made of sunzun wood which holds a net of da fibers. The hide of a male goat, called soni wolo ni (literally, soul of the skin of sacrifice), and two handles of ngolobe wood (3) complete the assemblage. The net, made of sixteen cotton

3. Combretum michrantum.

threads dyed with red ochre, kolo, is called ngwoni kene ba (literally, great space of the ngwoni) and represents Faro.

778 Before being used, the instrument is washed with water which will
794 be used later to cook the food for the family. Next, tomatoes are
532 pressed on the net and the juice runs into the hide which forms a pocket; holding the point in the right hand and the handle in the left, one then makes the drawings on the wall of the česo. The seeds of the fruit remain in the pouch until the following year to serve as a testimony to the offering. Next, with a red hot knife the following lines are engraved on the object: four lines, representing Faro, and two 16 lines, multiples of four, the female symbol. After each cut, "a rag saturated with fresh water is placed on it to soothe the pain." The frame is saturated with kola nut extract and four dots, the womb of women, are also marked with a black stone, kolofin. An egg is then smashed on the object to "refresh the soul of the ensemble."

304 throughout the seclusion, the cap itself guaranteeing protection of his
292 head against the rays of fire from the fifth sky, koblenkaba (see Fig. 14).

Seven large black dots, vertically disposed, represent the child, 3,
304 and his dya, 4, as well as the man, 3, which he will later become, and
292 his future wife, 4. They also insure his protection from east to west.
531 The two other dots insure it from north to south. The cross of small dots recalls the sumangolos, the "realization of the world" (1) and the

1. See p. 56, Fig. 4.

purification obtained after the operation and the loss of the wanzo. Eight tassels (Faro's number) are placed on the cap, whose fringes were spun by a grandmother and are sewn on to "attract the forces of space." A ninth at the top is blackened with the spirit's earth. With his head thus covered, the circumcised boy is placed in the protective and purifying light of Faro. To operate upon a child without putting the cap on him would in fact amount to "bowing down before the acts of Mousso Koroni."

On his part, the blacksmith-circumciser makes preparations for the
304 operation, the essential instrument of which is a knife called boloko
326 kumba moru (literally, knife head, mother of the circumcision).
413 He himself has forged it and carries it in a small leather sheath hung from his hip (see Fig. 15) (2).

[582]

2. The endogamy among blacksmiths is attributed to their role in circumcision and to the fact that their tools, especially this knife, are impregnated with the wanzo of the adolescents.

The handle is slipped into a sort of iron sheath closed at one extremity called kurukun (literally, ball head) and open at the other called sukala (literally, sorcerer's handle). It is forged from one piece with the blade dyomuru fala (literally, orphan of the knife) and called "without pity" in archaic language.

The knife and its handle on the one hand, together with the metal sheath on the other, symbolize the person of the circumcised boy and the foreskin which is to be removed.

304 326 532 413

Before the operation, the blacksmith washes the handle, an act which parallels /182/ the washing of the penis, and draws on the blade ritual designs either in charcoal or with boiled millet (1).

1. Some artisans have, once and for all, engraved the ritual designs on the blade.

The three figures ɲɛ mani saba (literally, three little male persons) represent the first three circumcised men (Gwonna, Gwondo, and Gwonkè) who belonged to the blacksmiths' families at the village of Gwondougou. Every descendant of these ancestors must be circumcised like them. In making the drawing the operator says:

"Gwonna, Gwondo, Gwonkè, you have discovered iron and you withstood the pain (of the first circumcision), you feel shame neither by night nor by day; our feet are placed in your footsteps; the iron did not shame you, let it not shame us; it is the will of Faro... attack, attack, attack" (these last three words are addressed to the knife)(2).

2. Gwonna, gwondo, gwonkè, aw ye neke damene, ka neke gale munyu, aw ma malo ʃu ani kle, an se daledo an se danola, neke maw malo a ka na an malo, faro hakili do, ʃu ʃu ʃu.

The four figures, muso mani nani (literally, four little female persons), are the first four excised women, the inventors of pottery, who were the wives of these blacksmith.

The bird is the tatugu koroni, the incarnation of the eight ancestors of the blacksmiths. It recalls that circumcision is painful; hard, hot, comparable to the effects of fire, and that it is necessary to labor and suffer in order to withstand the cutting knife. This is also what the artisan recalls when, as he operates the children, he sings several times over:

"The knife is hot; the timorous man cannot stand it. It is a purification" (3).

3. A ka gwã, ɲɛ ʃito tise ka mufiu, saniyali dó.

304 The foreskin, which is tied by a string (drawn at the center of the
532 blade) at the moment of the operation, is placed upon the pembele
413 (black rectangle) and the cutting knife is tapped with a small wooden
mallet, gossilã (drawn at the tip of the knife). These three figures receive during operation the offering of the first spurt of blood from the circumcised boy.

The line, which crosses the blade along the middle, separates the bird and the ancestors who gave proof of courage from the instruments used for the circumcision. As a division it symbolizes first of all that each grade of circumcised boys must be considered apart from the others. This is its social meaning. But the delicacy of the line itself has a meaning which applies to the individual: each one must, in his own image, be morally /183/ simple, just, and sensitive. By conforming to the rule symbolically indicated by the design, the individual will become a member of the elite.

304 The date of the operation is fixed when Mousso Koroni's star, sigi
787 dolo (Sirius), rises in the evening at a certain point in the east (1).
821

1. See note 1 p. 47. To determine the date, however, the ndomo society may be consulted, which sometimes postpones it to keep its members longer.

After the boys to be operated have been counted, each gets ready, and on the appointed day the mother washes her son's penis with water in which an iron axe or hoe has been soaked. Then she prepares a dish
[262] of rice, ye farina to "dish of man's bravery," which the child eats before he is led to the place of the operation, called yorola sakole "reserved place," located in the bush.

304 When all are gathered together the blacksmith-circumciser operates
326 upon each one in turn after he has made them sit down in a circle on the ground. Pulling and twisting the foreskin, he ties it with the string which he keeps taut by securing its extremity between his toes. He next places the member upon the pembele, rests the knife /on the foreskin/ and taps /it/ with the wooden mallet. In this way he cuts off the foreskin while saying the following words:

"Circumcised one, your father, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, the father of that one too, the ear (the genitals) of the ancestors of the latter have withstood (the pain); you, yourself, withstand it as

304 /184/ they did. Faro, Teliko, Soba! You who are a man, your number is three; three of the penis, three of the twins, designs of the penis, it is the tradition, withstand it; Faro!" (ter) /repeat three times/(1).

1. Bolokodɛ i fa, i moke, o ta fa, o ta fa were, o ta fa klo masamaw ye munyu, i yere ka munyu u cɔko la, faro, teliko, soba, o ye ce ta saba ye, wulu wo, flani wo, kolo nyeke, lada do, i ka munyu; faro (ter).

304 532 413

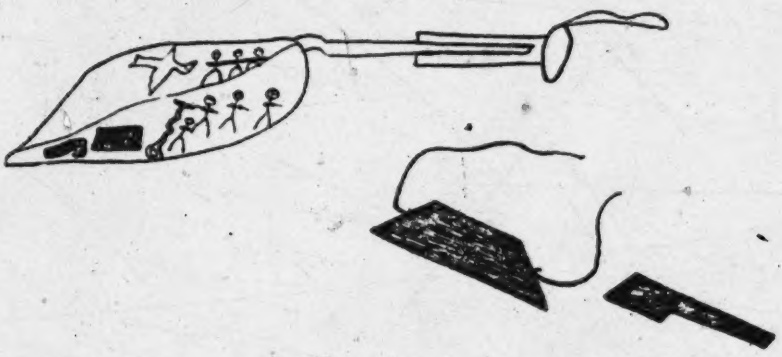

Fig. 15. — The circumcision knife decorated with ritual designs: three men and four women (representing the number seven); the bee eater symbolizing fire; the string; the small board; and the hammer used for the operation (these last two objects are reproduced on a larger scale to the right). (Drawing by an informant.)

304 326 831 After the removal, the operator makes scars upon the child's penis, called faro nyeke (literally, signs of Faro). Under the muscle wulu dyuru (literally, rope of the penis), a small hole is carefully made. Since the penis is considered a source of strength, the muscle which maintains it and erects it binds the circulation of the blood and helps man in all his acts. It is through this muscle that man transmits nerves to his children. A straight organ, firmly held in check, keeps the man and his descendants from numerous illnesses; the aim of this mutilation is to obtain complete and well formed foreskins and clitoris in the children of the party concerned. After the perforation, 304 326 843 the operator places in the orifice a little pepper and tomato juice while saying:

304 seven years and has a strictly religious character (5). The gnéna-

5. This ceremony takes place only once every seven years. The girls are always fairly big when their chests are tattooed.

sonnaba, surrounded by his council, the gouatigi, sacrifices to the dasiri; a hen is offered to the shades of the ancestors, the family boli are /173/ taken out of their dirty skins and sprinkled with blood, and all the village makes merry. People go in procession to the place 304 where the blacksmith tattooer is, and as long as the operation lasts 533 the women clap their hands, marking time for the blacksmith, who sings as he operates, and together they join in the chorus.

The tattoo, the chief distinctive mark of the people, is made 304 with a knife having one or two blades. The two-bladed knife cer- ● 413 tainly makes a tattoo which stands out more and has more detail, but it also requires more skill on the part of the operator, and, doubtless for this reason, it is relatively unusual.

At present a great many Bambara no longer wear the mark of 314 their tribe on their cheeks. The Moslems have contributed greatly to the abolition of this painful practice. Before the arrival of Europeans, under the reigns of Ahmadou and Madani, very severe punishments were inflicted on anyone who tattooed himself or had his children tattooed. One should not think, however, that tattooing was ever a [187] strict and unqualified requirement; in this connection everything is entrusted to the decision of diviners and sorcerers, of djiné, or gnéna, genii, and especially of the family boli, which are consulted and sacrificed to in order to find out whether or not it is necessary to wear the marks of the tribe. Thus it is not unusual to find that some members of a family are tattooed and others are not, and that those who are not tattooed have their children tattooed, while the tattooed refrain from doing so. This ceremony is carried out every seven years, and the head of the family may be away when the blacksmith tattooer comes by, so that the sacrifices do not take place, and the tattooing of the children is put off until seven years later. When they have